[Country Editor]

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Henry H. Pratt

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Canaan is a small, but notable, town of fewer than 1500 inhabitants; it is one of three or four towns of its size in New Hampshire that is the home of a weekly newspaper. This weekly newspaper, too, is distinguished beyond what probably is appreciated by the majority of its local readers. Its editor could boast, were it not for his abhorrence of any least thing whic h smacks of [vainglory?], of illustrious contributors, of comradely regard from publications of nation-wide repute, of respectful esteem from prominent people to whom the Reporter goes, week by week, in distant states. Its candle is set in a humble candlestick among the New Hampshire hills but for more than three score years and ten it has given light to all who are in its house, and far beyond.

"A small town that has a newspaper in it [is?] fortunate," said Mr. Edward A. Barney, editor of the Canaan Reporter, discussing the ins and outs of country editorship; "humble exponent of the fourth estate though it may be, it is a desirable possession for a town of this size.

"May I illustrate that claim by an actual occurrence? Some years ago a prominent manufacturing pharmacist of Jersey City wrote to Canaan asking for a copy of the town's newspaper. A copy was sent him together with an invitation for him to come up and look us over and to stay with me while he was here.

"He came, was pleased with what he saw, purchased an estate on Sawyer Hill, and eventually made of it one of the show places of Canaan. He has spent a lot of money here; his coming to us has been one of the greatest benefits the town ever received.

"He said to me in the course of our correspondence:

" 'I have found that one can often form a pretty correct impression of a town from the newspaper that represents it.'

"The country editor, through his paper, does have the opportunity of representing country people in their true light better than any other agent; he has the privilege of speaking for the country as well as to the country, of introducing his town to the world as worthily as it should be.

"This gentleman continued his relations with the paper...as a very helpful contributor. He wrote for it, at his own suggestion, articles on things which interested him about the town and countryside. He wrote, too, not as a city man to a more simple country folk, but from the country angle, a thing rather [exceptional?] in itself. In that way he became one of us, doing a fine and helpful job for the paper as well. He enjoyed writing...took it seriously.

"The Reporter is one of the state's old family papers. My father established it in 1867. He exemplified in that the courageous beginnings of many country newspapers, for he had no capital to fall back on; I guess he founded the paper largely on faith[md]in himself.

"I wish I knew more of his early life; I have often wished, since he died, that I could ask him questions about a lot of things. He was born over on Razor Hill, in Orange, in the years when that town was a sizeable farming community, on an old hard-scrabble farm[md]written with a small "h". The family had to work hard for what they got from it; it never produced a competence for anybody.

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"What education my father [??] obtained [?] Canaan Union Academy, up on the Street, gave him. That was all he had[md]he couldn't afford any more. In those days boys were fortunate to have that much.

"While attending the Academy he boarded with the Wallaces and probably that was where he became infected with the newspaper idea. Mr. Allen Wallace had been a printer, reporter, editor, free-lance writer, ever since he was fifteen years old. He had been several times back and forth across the continent[md]had been a war correspondent for a California paper[md]was an old hand at the newspaper game. He / had published in Canaan, at irregular intervals, a newssheet, and I think he must have made father a rather attractive offer of some sort to take up the work and develop it.

"Anyway Mr. Wallace turned over to him the old hand press on which he had printed the newssheet , to begin with. Father had no capital, as I have mentioned, on which he could depend unless Mr. Wallace may have stood back of him somewhat. I don't know as to that.

"My father was only twenty-three years old when he began work on his paper. Seems pretty young to you? Well, young fellows used to take up the responsibilities of business earlier in life then than now. Their schooling was all done, what little there was of it; most people had no money with which to give their boys any education beyond the district school; they had to go to work to support themselves. Their folks were all done with them.

"For years after I was old enough to take notice of things, the Reporter was still printed by hand power; the old presses driven by a crank. Father never had any money ahead with which to buy new machinery[md]never made the paper pay more than a living[md]never accumulated any surplus until he was seventy years old. I suppose that was about the time he caught up with himself. He started with nothing[md]less, if anything[md] and never got ahead any until late in life.

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"I know my father was a very bright man, intellectually[md][an?] unusually able country editor and writer[md]a genius at that work[md]but he was never any kind of a business manager. I can look back and see what an advantage it would have been to me in my upward climb with the paper if I could have had good business training. I've suffered from the lack of it. Even now I find myself, almost unconsciously, travelling along some of the old ruts worn by my father in his innocence of good business methods-uneconomical ways of doing things. Only the other day I stopped to wonder why I was doing a certain thing in a certain way. I couldn't see any reason for it, come to think, except that my father had always done that way; I could see good reasons against it. So I changed.

"That's the way I've learned my business[md]trial and error[md]making mistakes and trying to profit by their correction[md]a wasteful, tedious path of learning. Skilful guidance when I was young would have meant a lot to me.

"Nor have I had any school training in journalism. My general education was practically 'nil'[md]largely through my own fault. I went to such high school as we had in those days but... well, it was different from what we have to-day. I was inattentive to the instruction[md]my own fault.

"My practical education in newspaper work came from the office of a little country newspaper, and that is about as near self-education as a man can get down to. One can, doubtless, learn spelling, punctuation, grammar as well from picking type in a county office as anywhere, but he isn't surrounded by conditions for self-advancement in composition. He lacks good models for imitation.

"The typical contributor to country newspapers does not furnish the rising editor with good models of writing. He just plays along with simple new items, and in those largely fails to see and construct the story they contain.

"So, for improvement in writing, I fell back on the old trial and error game. In addition to my own contributions to the Reporter, I wrote constantly for other periodicals. The stuff I wrote was nothing very wonderful, I guess, but enough of it was accepted to encourage me along. I depended on the law of averages to make good; I figured that if one out of every hundred of my articles was accepted, and if I produced a sufficient number of hundreds, I'd keep getting ahead. My being in newspaper work myself may have helped some toward getting my articles accepted. But it was different [?] matter from what the periodicals went to-day; I couldn't write this modern stuff.

"That's not an easy question to answer--whether [;?] if I were back where I could have my choice of going to college or spending the same amount of time in practical newspaper work, in the light of my experience what would I do? I've never quite made up my mind about the value of a college education to a country editor[md]practical value, I mean. Of course an editor can't have too much general knowledge, and perhaps in the city there wouldn't be any danger of going too 'high-brow'. But in a country weekly... well, I think I'd choose the practical experience, in a good live country office, over the time spent in college. Any newspaper man, anywher e, has opportunity enough to gather up about all his brain will hold; a country newspaper office is a pretty good college.

"It has seemed to me remarkable what genuine interest really big men are taking, of late, in our humble country newspapers. I have mentioned my doctor friend and the help he has given us in contributing to our columns.

Mr. Wallace I. Gould was another who brought great assistance to us. Mr. Gould is an important executive in the New York office of Montgomery Ward; a really big man in that organization, I am told. Summering, one season, over in Orange, he came into the Reporter office[md]as many summer people do[md] and became acquainted. After we were quite well acquainted he volunteered to write something for us if we would care to have him. He is a Dartmouth [alumnus?], of fine education and business training, yet a very modest , unassuming man. It was almost timidly he made his offer of writing[md]said ,

half apologetically, that he was afraid anything he could write wouldn't please us...[but?] he'd love to do it.

"For almost two years he wrote, every week, from New york, a column or more for the Reporter. He wrote on a wide variety of subjects[md]took his writing very seriously. Finally, he regretted that pressure of business compelled him to give it up. I was surprised that he had kept it up so long, but it was a [wonderful?] [t ing?] thing for the paper while he was doing it.

"A Princeton professor was another. He, too, became acquainted with the Reporter while spending the summer in Orange.

"He was a man you wouldn't expect to notice a little country sheet; he was an associate of Einstein, what one might call a super-professor. He was sought for consultation by professors [from?] all the colleges in that region.

"But in the fall when Dartmouth went down to play football with Princeton, he wrote up to ask if he might cover the game for the Reporter; he said he was going to sit with the Dartmouth crowd, and would like to write up the game for us.

"It made me smile[md]with gratification, however [md]when Mrs. Hight told me one summer how Mr. Hight had missed the Reporter one whole week.

"The Hights were hotel people from Washington, who summered in Canaan and, [cors-quently?] consequently , subscribed for the local paper.

"The 'miss' was for only one issue[md]the only failure of publication in the whole history of the paper as far as I know. Pressure of other things simply squeezed it out that week.

" 'Has the Reporter come? Where is that paper?'

"Thus Mr. Hight every time he came in; always, through the week, expecting the paper, always disappointed when it failed to appear.

"And he hasn't been the only one with an attachment for it.

"When my father started the Reporter, back in 1867, the country newspaper had the rural field pretty much to itself. The city dailies hadn't invaded it, at least up here, to any great extent. I remember having, as a boy, a few dailies to peddle around, but there was nothing like a general circulation for them. What news people got in the country they read once a week from their local papers; what advertising they saw, they gathered from the same source. World events didn't interest them much; any,way anyway they were contented to bide the coming of the weekly to learn about them.

"It was after the turn of the century before the big dailies came up here very much. It was the war with Spain that really built up their circulation in this region; there , was outside news the country folk couldn't wait a week for.

"But the weeklies still have their own peculiar field all to themselves[md]always will have it[md]the field of local news[md]the doings of the neighbors.

"There was a time when the city dailies poked a lot of fun at the ' Bingville Bugles ' and their grist of small gossip. But while they were casting such stones with their right hands, with their left they were creating the same sort of papers within the city itself. The hunger to know what the folks around the corner in one's own neighborhood are up to is not limited to country people.

"No less a city than New York is the home of a company which issues local editions in the Bronx, Harlem, Washington Heights, Yorkville, Brooklyn. Most big cities have a group of such papers, issued from the central office of some publishing organization, each devoted

to a local area, their purpose being to give its readers / more detailed neighborhood news than the big papers could do. Country newspapers gone urban, you see.

"The thing the country paper / exists for is local news. I never can get enough of local items. They are the very reason for [existence?] of the weekly paper. There is a constant famine of that sort of material. A good diligent correspondent is the backbone of the country paper. One worthy of that term will labor in season, out of season[md]for news items. I would rate a column of live news from one of my correspondents far higher than any 'high-brow' editorial which could be written. The editorial might appeal to six or eight readers; the news column appeals to them all.

"I rate editorials, in a country paper, or of small importance. They are skipped by a lot of readers[md]most of them, probably. Somehow they feel they can't be bothered by such weighty subjects. If editorials are to have any interest at all, to country readers, they must be about live local subjects, written from the rural point of view.

"It is not easy to understand the peculiarities of country people to whom the editor speaks through his columns, nor to write from their point of view. It is well-nigh impossible , unless one has been brought up among them, boy and man, unless his habit of thinking is after the same pattern as theirs. It is difficult for people from the outside to sympathize with their limitations.

"It would trouble the editor of a city paper, coming to the country press in his declining years, or any newspaper man habituated to the patterns of thought of a cosmopolitan people, to write as country people think. Any editor of a country paper, himself one 'of the soil', be he from Michigan or Kansas, could come into New Hampshire and edit a country paper with success. Country sections are the same the nation over; if one understands the conditions and people of one section, he understands them in all.

"Not so with the city man, bred to different conditions. He would be regarded with distrust by the country people; he would [not?] be one of them, would not address them 'in their

language'. They are suspicious of a person, educated by conditions different from theirs, until he has proved his sincerity. That takes a long time. Whatever he wrote would most probably be considered 'high-brow'. Boasting a very simple education themselves, thinking almost in words of one syllable, country people regard as conceited anyone writing from the point of view of a superior education no matter how naturally that writing may flow from its author. Nothing could be more fatal to an editor's influence than a reputation of for being conceited.

"Many people seem to write for the country papers for their self-gratification[md]they like to see their stuff in print. They write more to themselves than to their readers; if it sounds well to themselves, it's pretty good stuff. It is so exceedingly easy for the country reader to miss the point, that a city man , who can write for country perception , is rare.

"These limitations, preferences, prejudices, of country people may seem ridiculous to those not brought up among them, but..... there they are and the editor who hopes to be successful among them must take them these [peculiarties?] into serious account.

"The country editor of a half century ago was a quite different person from the editor of the modern weeky weekly newspaper; he had a different social status.

"The country editor of that day was less sophisticated, in common with a large part of his readers. The instruments with which he performed his work were cruder; the contributions to his paper were less polished[md]not worded as the universal spread of good schooling has now made them.

"By people of the unlettered social levels he was looked up to as a sort of superior being; they viewed him with the respect attaching to one who could do what they themselves could not do, and which many of them would like to do[md]he could write. His education might not have been high, as rated by modern standards, but he could write, and the man

who could do that[md]have his material appear in print, was in the thinking of his time endowed with a sort of genius which elevated him a bit above the common herd.

"But above this social level, by the people of privilege, of education, of business competence, the country editor was regarded with a good-natured condesension. He was considered as decidedly picturesque, a sort of "character".

"There used to be the feeling extant that the country newspaper was not quite a solvent proposition. Its editor was looked upon, by more prosperous people, with something the same sentiment as the village preacher[md]a man of worth, in character and talents, who was willing to sacrifice much of this world's [goos?] goods to follow the line of his tastes and abilities in a higher work for his fellowmen. Editing a paper, if one liked that sort of thing and was willing to afford it, was all well enough, but no kind of a business.

"The editor himself regarded his work as something resembling a "call"; he was willing to follow it for the privilege of making use of talents a little different from those of the common run of people, and which gained him a regard among his own people of the soil.

"He was a sort of oracle among them[md]a fount of earthly wisdom. His opinion was given weight; he was in a position to have knowledge of many things which was denied them; he dealt with the mysteries of literary pursuits.

"But the old-time country editor had need to know other things than the juggling of words[md]he needed to be a jack-at-all-trades. He must understand the kinds a and repairs of what machinery he had; he must be a practical printer; he must be able to set his hand to a thousand-and-one things about the office to keep it going smoothly. To be sure, he could hire many of these things done for him, but the income from his paper was small, and did not allow much hiring of help without turning the profits from his own pockets into theirs.

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"At one minute the editor might be tickering on a balky press; the next, he would be dashing of f an editorial. At times he was scouring the village for news items; back in the office he might come to put these items into type with his own hands. He had no office staff among which to systematize his work. It was a one-man office.

"The tramp printer was another picturesque hanger-on of the country newspaper. he was a thorn-in-the- flesh to many of the editors. He is pretty well gone, now, but he stayed with the country papers long after the modern machinery of the city offices made typesetting by hand obsolete.

"For all the tramp printer could do was set type by hand. At least that was all he ever would do[md]never professed any knowledge about any other work about a printing office. He was an indifferent typesetter. First of all he was a tramp; secondarily a typesetter. We hired them out of pure pity, not because they were of any use to us.

"Seymour was one of the last who ever came around here. He made the Reporter office a port of call, regularly, about once a year. He'd stop a few days or a week or two, clear for some other port, and / repeat. He was no good, even in rush seasons.

"I remember he had worked for me one spell when I met him on my way down to the office one morning. He wanted to "settle up" then and there, and be off. We discussed a few minutes. He became abusive. Said he, in the course of his [tirade?]:

"'I've stood the inabsence of the Barneys for forty years[md]and I'm all done.'

"What he meant by that I never knew; but I discovered another 'inabsence' shortly. The lady where he had borded boarded hailed me a bit later.

" 'Anyhow,' she judged, 'Seymour profited some by his stay here; I noticed he had a pretty good overcoat when he left.'

"That gave me a thought. I dashed back to the office[md]to the closet where I kept my overcoat. Gone! A good solk silk -lined overcoat.

"That didn't keep him from facing me for a job the next year. It was a cold winter day when he appeared in the office.

" 'Keep right on going,' I told him,' we want no more of you. Keep going.'

" 'But you'll let me stay long enough to soak up some heat, won't you', he begged, ' enough to last me a while, anyway?'

"I couldn't refuse him that. But he hadn't entirely got his fill of staying by the stove when I took him by the arm and [gently?] , but firmly , pushed him onto the sidewalk.

"Yet once again he came[md]the next year. That time I met him at the door.

" 'Keep going' I admonished him, 'just keep right on going.'

"That was sometime ago; I have never seen him since.

"The world around the country editor improved and carried him along with it. The country is coming into its own. People are coming to look on the country as a good place to live in. Time after time prominent and successful people come in to tell me of their desire to get back into the country to live, sometime. The automobile, the radio, the extension of electric service have given / the country the conveniences of the city without the back-breaking rents and the strenuous life.

"Country life is becoming attractive, also, to the younger set who think seriously[,?] the drift toward the city is slowing down.

"And with the coming of the country toward the front the country editor and his newspaper is becoming better known; with the improvement of country life the country newspaper

office has changed. It has become a business concern. It has posessed itself of modern, power-driven machinery; it has abolished much of the need of hand labor. It has systematized its work among a larger staff; it has become a city paper on a smaller scale.

"For myself I do not claim so much. I am in a transitional stage. A lot of modern machinery has come into my office, but it is still staffed by too few people to give it a modern system.

"I have never bee n afraid of hard work and long hours; I am the jack-at-all-trades sort of editor. I solicit advertisements , write special features, gather news items, set a lot of type, carry on a general information bureau for the public.

The editor of the Manchester (N.H.) Union once told me:

"'You are filling a more strenuous job than any editor on my staff. There, each man has his own particular job[md]that's all, you have everything to see to.'

"But the country newspaper, in these days, has to be a going business, and it is still hard pressed for income in small areas like mine. It canot cannot be supported by subscriptions and advertising alone. Practically every country newspaper office has to be a job print.

"Of course we need all the advertising we can get, but most of it is local[md]does not carry very high rates. The big national advertisers are not interested in the country weekly; they can't be attracted by it. Several organized attempts on the part of country [newspapers?] have been made to secure their business but thus far they these attempts have amounted to nothing.

"Legal notices are an important source of revenue for us, as is political advertising, which pays very good rates. This last is seasonal, coming only at election times; its amount depends somewhat on the heat of the contests. But, as I said, , the country paper needs revenue beyond subscription and advertising, and the most important source of that further revenue is job printing.

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"Here is where the jack-at-all-trades editor comes in; he needs to hire less help, if he is willing to work, and the profits saved for himself go a long way toward sustaining the paper.

"Some offices are a job print first, publishing a paper as a side issue; others, practically all of the old family newspapers, give their publication the right of way and carry on the job print to help support it.

"Next to the job print , as a supplementary source of support with me , comes my newsstand. The sale of magazines and newspapers affords me a considerable income. Other offices have other supplementary income; side lines in all business are becoming rather necessary to-day.

"Country newspaper newspapers have been developing a habit of wandering far afield from their home areas; what they have to say is listened to by a wider and wider area. To show you this , here's a curious instance.

"Before my father left the paper the Reporter wheelbarrow strayed off, and failed to return.

"After a decent time father inserted, in the paper, a request to the one who had borrowed it to be kind enough to return it.

"No result.

"I have mentioned that my father was an able writer to the point , when he set his hand to it...a writer of clearness and force.

He empoyed employed these qualities in publishing his second request for the return of the wheelbarrow.

"Still the time ran on...and no wheelbarrow.

"Then father let himself go; the third insertion of the reques request was a good example of the advertising which attracts notice, incisive writing the point of which one needs no acumen to feel.

"The wheelbarrow never came back, but news of that advertisement did. A man, home from Florida, told us he had seen a cppy copy of that ad. posted in a Palm Beach hotel."

Yes, our country editors and the newspapers they publish, are taking their the places they deserve in the modern world. The ' Bingville Bugle ' has gone to be with the Ark and the Mastodon; our country papers to-day walk hand in hand, with in true family feeling, with the bigger, but no better, publications of the nation.

Lying on the editorial desk was a back number of the Canaan Reporter. A small space was occupied by the reprint of a letter, and to that letter was appended the signature of the magazine, "Life".

Curiosity led to questions, which drew reluctant answers from Mr. Barney.

"I don't think that's anything which would interest anybody outside of my own little circle of local friends; I just printed that letter for them...thought a few people, here, might be interested....that's all."

This was the letter, addressed to the " Canaan Reporter " , with a prelude of apology for not knowing the author of the article which was mentioned.

"We would like to thank you for the interesting column on "Life" which appeared in the October 27 issue of the Reporter.....The column was extremely well written and accurate."

"I wrote the article for the benefit of my readers, only, and naturally did not sign it. It contained a brief history of the magazine, emphasizing its tremendous recent growth, and

the difficulty it was having to produce enough copies to meet the demand of its increasing circulation. I was tremendously surprised that "Life" ever noticed it," Mr. Barney explained, rather diffidently.

Truly, the humble country editor is taking his place with the great of the earth.